

BlueDevil II

88th Regional Readiness Command

Summer 2005 Vol. X, No. 2

The CG's Final Ride



www.usarc.army.mil/88thrrsc/

Greetings!! It gives me great pleasure to return to the 88th Regional Readiness Command. I've spent the bulk of my career serving in this command as a Soldier, and am proud to have this opportunity to serve as its commander.

For starters, I'd like to share with you my commander's intent, meant to give focus as to what is important.

The basis for my intent is embodied in a statement expressed regularly by Lt. Gen. James Helmly, "always do the right thing, rather than do everything right." The following bullets summarize my intent.

- Combat readiness is everything. The Army Reserve will continue to provide combat support and combat service support enabling the combat forces to do the job they do so well.
- Standards and discipline are never lowered, always the target. Study, understand and live the Army values.

- Warrior exercises need to focus on Warrior Ethos with minor emphasis on technical training.

- Protect the Force. This covers a wide spectrum, ranging from antiterrorism efforts to the safety of each Soldier on and off duty. Our Army has developed superb risk management procedures; if employed correctly, these procedures protect our Soldiers.

- Ensure you care for your Soldiers' families. Soldiers can only properly focus on the mission to their front when they aren't concerned about their loved one's welfare in the rear.

- Reconstitution has importance equal to deployment. Our equipment is one of our Army's strengths. It must be properly accounted for and maintained for it to be ready. Know the maintenance management system and make it work for you.

- Change is the norm. Those who cannot manage change will be left be-

hind as we move forward with improvements to our structure and way of doing business in the Army Reserve.

- Leaders must know their role in establishing a good command climate that re-emphasizes and re-establishes our commitment to the principles of strong, responsible leadership.

- Take accountability for your performance and hold subordinates accountable for theirs.

- Finally, exercise administrative discipline to ensure timely, accurate actions. Be comprehensive and anticipatory, with an emphasis on ratings and awards.

Blue Devils!

Maj. Gen. Robert A. Pollmann,
Commander, 88th RRC



From the Top

As we continue to fight the Global War on Terrorism, and as units continue to deploy in support of ongoing operations, we as Blue Devils need to be as proficient as possible in the tasks that are placed before us. I want to address two important issues that can make or break a deployment.

First, we know that training is an important element of preparing for any future mission. In the Army, we are constantly adapting and improving our training to best prepare our Soldiers to deploy and support any mission in the Army AOR. However, I sometimes hear Soldiers complain about the training not being completely relevant to the theater to which they will be deployed.

While it may be true that every minute of classroom or field training may not be applied downrange, please keep in mind that the training you receive is only a foundation—as a professional Soldier, you are required to adapt that foundation of training to the country in which you will be serving. Let's face it—no matter how good the training is, it won't perfectly simulate the 120+ degree weather of Iraq or insurgents attacking a convoy.

If we effectively adapt what we have learned in our training to our tasks in country, we will be able to accomplish the mission much more effectively.

The other key point I'd like to make is more moral than physical. I'm talking about the Army Values, those words you may have memorized at one point: loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage. But in order to really make it through a deployment, Soldiers must see these attributes as more than just words—they are important character traits that we must live by every day. The Army Values are a guide to lead the American Soldier to a higher standard. Without these values as a foundation, deploying Soldiers may find it very hard to make the right decisions during the stresses of a deployment. Live the Army Values, and making the right choice in a hot spot may become a little easier.

Take the Point!
Command Sgt. Major John Werner,
Command Sergeant Major, 88th RRC



Contents

Departments

CG's Corner	2
From the Top	2
Letters & Commentary	4
Bits & Pieces	25
Equal Opportunity	27

Features

Featured Photo	5
Wall of Heroes	6
Making a Difference in Iraq	10
New Web Portal	12
Change of Command	14
'Out Front' in Afghanistan	18
Maupin Remembered	20
Back to Work	22
New TRICARE Option	24



On the cover

Brig. Gen. Michael W. Beasley (right, standing) conducts a final review alongside the Lt. Gen. James R. Helmly, chief of the Army Reserve. (pages 14-17)

Photo by Spc. Adam Dielschneider

On the back

Soldiers salute during the Sgt. Matt Maupin Computer Lab dedication in Iraq. (pages 20, 21)

U.S. Army photo

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COMMENTARY: Editors Ponder How To Present A Broad Picture Of Iraq

Rosemary Goudreau, the editorial page editor of The Tampa Tribune, has received the same e-mail message a dozen times over the last year.

“Did you know that 47 countries have re-established their embassies in Iraq?” the anonymous polemic asks, in part. “Did you know that 3,100 schools have been renovated?”

“Of course we didn’t know!” the message concludes. “Our media doesn’t tell us!”

Ms. Goudreau’s newspaper, like most dailies in America, relies largely on The Associated Press for its coverage of the Iraq war. So she finally forwarded the e-mail message to Mike Silverman, managing editor of The A.P., asking if there was a way to check these assertions and to put them into context. Like many other journalists, Mr. Silverman had also received a copy of the message.

Ms. Goudreau’s query prompted an unusual discussion last month in New York at a regular meeting of editors whose newspapers are members of The Associated Press. Some editors expressed concern that a kind of bunker mentality was preventing reporters in Iraq from getting out and explaining the bigger picture beyond the daily death tolls.

“The bottom-line question was, people wanted to know if we’re making progress in Iraq,” Ms. Goudreau said, and the A.P. articles were not helping to answer that question.

“It was uncomfortable questioning The A.P., knowing that Iraq is such a dangerous place,” she said. “But there’s a perception that we’re not telling the whole story.”

Mr. Silverman said in an interview that he was aware of that perception. “Other editors said they get calls from

readers who are hearing stories from returning troops of the good things they have accomplished while there, and readers find that at odds with the generally gloomy portrayal in the papers of what’s going on in Iraq,” he said.

S u k i
D a r d a r i a n ,

deputy managing editor of The Seattle Times and vice president of the board of the Associated Press Managing Editors, said that the discussion was “a pretty healthy one.”

“One of the things the editors felt was that as much context as you can bring, the better,” Ms. Dardarian said. “They wanted them to get beyond the breaking news to ‘What does this mean?’”

She also said that as Mr. Silverman and Kathleen Carroll, The A.P.’s executive editor, responded to the concerns, the editors realized that some questions were impossible to answer. For example, she said, the editors understood that it was much easier to add up the number of dead than to determine how many hospitals received power on a particular day or how many schools were built.

Mr. Silverman said the wire service was covering Iraq “as accurately as we can” while “also trying to keep our people out of harm’s way.”

Iraq remains the most dangerous place in the world to work as a journalist, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists. At least 13 media workers have been killed in Iraq so far this year, bringing the total to 50 since the war began in 2003.

Mr. Silverman said The A.P. had already decided before the meeting that it would have Robert H. Reid, an A.P. correspondent at large who has reported frequently from Iraq, write an overview every 10 days.

Mr. Silverman also said the wire service would make more effort to flag articles that look beyond the breaking news. As it turned out, he said, most of the information in the anonymous e-mail message had been reported by The A.P., but the details had been buried in articles or the articles had been overlooked.

Before the meeting, The A.P. collected three articles by reporters for other news organizations who were embedded with American troops and sent them out over the wire to provide “more voice.” Mr. Silverman said he wanted to do more of that but the opportunities were limited because there are only three dozen embedded journalists now, compared with 700 when the war began more than two years ago.

Ms. Goudreau, for one, found the discussion useful. By the end, she said, editors were acknowledging that even in their own hometowns, “we’re more likely to focus on people who are killed than on the positive news out of a school.”

By Katharine Q. Seelye, Copyright © 2005 by The New York Times Co. Reprinted with permission

From the editor

The *Blue Devil II* is for Soldiers, DA civilians and family members. We invite readers’ views.

Please stay fewer than 150 words and include your name, rank and address. Anonymous letters will generally not be used. We may condense your views because of space. We can’t publish or answer every one, but we’ll use representative views. Write to: Letters, *Blue Devil II*, 506 Roeder Circle, Fort Snelling, MN 55111-4009, or email: 88PAO@usarc-emh2.army.mil



'...And the home of the brave'

Spc. Christine Tollison, a postal clerk with the 329th Postal Company, sings the "National Anthem" at the Target Center in Minneapolis before the July 17 Minnesota Lynx and Connecticut Suns WNBA game.

Among her many accomplishments, Tollison has appeared on the David Letterman show twice and has sung "God Bless America" at a Minnesota Twins game.

Photo by Spc. Michael Weerts



Brig. Gen. Michael W. Beasley, commanding general of the 88th RRC at the time of the ceremony, and Lt. General James R. Helmly, chief of the Army Reserve, unveil the Wall of Heroes memorial at Fort Snelling on July 9. The wall memorializes Soldiers of the 88th RRC who were killed in action during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Photo by Staff Sgt. Chris Farley

Honoring Blue Devil Heroes

Command dedicates memorial wall to 88th Soldiers KIA in current, past operations

The sun was high and hot July 9 as the 88th Regional Readiness Command (Army Reserve) unveiled its Wall of Heroes Memorial at Fort Snelling, Minn. Dedicated to fallen 88th RRC Soldiers throughout history, the Wall of Heroes honors the 17 Soldiers killed in action during Operation Iraqi Freedom, as well as those from previous conflicts.

The unveiling was attended by Soldiers of the command, family members of the fallen, and distinguished supporters and guests, including the commanding general of the U.S. Army Reserve, Lt. Gen. James A. Helmly.

During the ceremony Brig. Gen. Michael W. Beasley, the commander of the 88th RRC at the time of the ceremony, recalled the accomplishments and honors of the 88th and the heroic addition the 17 fallen Army Reserve Soldiers made to that proud history.

“I could start one story but it would take me hours to tell all of them; we are dealing with America’s finest heroes on this wall,” he said.

Beasley’s comments were followed by those of Brig. Gen. Irwin K. Cockett Jr., (Ret). Cockett was in attendance as a special guest and is known for his distinguished service in

special operations and aviation, as well as his multiple combat tours in Korea and Vietnam. Cockett spoke briefly but poignantly to the assembled families. He greeted them warmly in the manner of his native state of Hawaii, spoke to them of the courage of their Soldiers, and remarked how the hardest task any commander faces is that of telling a family the story of how their loved one died.

“It is always difficult to understand, why, why my son, my father, my family,” Cockett said. “Only the good Lord can tell us why. However, it is for us, the living, to honor their
continued on page 8



A trumpeter from the 451st Army Band performs "Taps" at the July 9 dedication of the Wall of Heroes memorial at Fort Snelling. The wall memorializes Soldiers of the 88th RRC who were killed in action during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Photo by Staff Sgt. Chris Farley



Shelly Wentz touches the plaque of her son, Sgt. Brad Wentz, on the Wall of Heroes memorial at Fort Snelling, Minn.

Photo by Spc. Michael Weerts

continued from page 6

memory and to know that in time – time is a wonderful healer.”

To the current Soldiers of the 88th, Cockett had a special message that was just as strongly spoken.

“To the Soldiers that are with us today: your ranks grow thinner, but know that your comrades demand you carry on with duty, honor, and country, lest they have died in vain.”

As the midday sun rose higher in the sky and the temperatures continued to soar, Helmly took his turn to honor the families of the fallen Soldiers, and to try to put into context the bonds that tie Soldiers – all Soldiers, past and present – together, regardless of branch or rank.

“I’m Ron Helmly,” he began. “I am an American Soldier. It’s the proudest title that I wear because I’m privi-

leged to serve in the company of all you that wear our uniform today, and those of you that have worn our uniform previously. It is an honored title, and I would ask all of you from this day forward, that when you see an American Soldier, sailor, Marine, or coast guardsman – stop – and simply say thank you. By saying thank you for their service, you will be remembering and honoring those that we’re here to honor today.”

For Helmly, it is the oaths that all Soldiers swear that seems to bring such significance to their sacrifice.

“Each of these Soldiers raised a hand with their oath and swore before God, ‘Send me,’” said Helmly. “In spite of the danger, in spite of the certain sacrifice, in spite of the certainty of hardships, they said, ‘Send me.’”

After the remarks were concluded, the Calling of the Last Roll was conducted by Command Sgt. Maj. John S. Werner. As Werner read the names, the families of those Soldiers slowly stood and were recognized. For each of the fallen, several stood – parents, children, wives – each family member a stark reminder that the loss of a single Soldier is felt deeply by many.

Since Sept. 11th, 2001, the United States has lost more than 1,300 Soldiers and more than 1,800 service members to the Global War on Terror. Of those, 80 were from the U.S. Army Reserve, including the 17 Soldiers honored on the Wall of Heroes in the 88th’s Blue Devil Museum here.

While the focus of the memorial was for the fallen, two guests in attendance at Saturday’s memorial



Mark Kiser clutches the flag given in memory of his father, Staff Sgt. Charles Kiser, during the July 9 ceremony.

Photo by Spc. Michael Weerts

were very special living examples of the strength of the 88th's Soldiers and the love of their families. Those men were Spc. Jeremy Church, an 88th RRC Soldier from the 724th Transpor-

tation Company, the only Army Reserve Soldier to be awarded the Silver Star during the Global War on Terrorism, and Keith Maupin, the father of Sgt. Keith "Matt" Maupin, also

of the 724th, who is the only Soldier currently listed as captured in Operation Iraqi Freedom. ♦

By Staff Sgt. Tomas Rofkahr, 364th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment



Soldiers from the 452nd Quartermaster Company distribute care packages to an Iraqi village. The Soldier's family members originally sent the packages to support their troops, but the Soldiers received more than they needed.

U.S. Army photo

Soldiers deployed to Iraq send back some... Lessons from the sand

Teamwork with unfamiliar people and different ethical cultures can include challenging obstacles, but units returning from Iraq have found, adapting and persisting to complete the mission are important factors to consider.

Sgt. 1st Class Glen Flemming, a truck master from the 706th Transportation Company from Ohio, experienced numerous situations while deployed in Iraq he wished he would have handled differently.

"We needed a training schedule for the Soldiers so everyone could be on the same page, and commanders needed to let Soldiers know their role and let them establish who is doing what and let the squad leaders take over and dictate the situation," Flemming urged. "It was tough

interacting with the active units—don't get me wrong, they were big help—but it took time to adjust to each other's ways. There were some bumps in the road, but we battled through them and proved that Active and Reserve can coincide together and accomplish the mission."

The 706th had problems with broken vehicles and limited equipment in the early stages of their tour. "We had to jury-rig a lot of the vehicles in order to get them back to the shop and work on them with better tools. More tow bars would have been a lot of help," said Flemming.

Flemming also encourages units who are deploying soon to contact the unit they are replacing. "Communication is key, and to be aware of your living conditions, future surroundings, and knowing what the situation is will bring comfort to Soldiers to help them prepare for what they

are about to be up against,” he said.

While it was difficult enough to form a bond with other units, the situation with the Iraqi workers and civilian contractors was even more of a challenge to adapt to.

“It was a learning process when we first started,” said Sgt 1st Class Kurt Boyack of the 452nd Quartermaster Company. “We had to keep the crews together by which religion they were, because it caused conflict when the Muslims would take Friday off and then the Christians would take Sunday off. It was a lot easier once we formed the groups according to religions, gave them a deadline and let the contractor know there would be deductions from their check if the deadline was not met -- it worked out for the most part.”

Sgt. 1st Class Dale Melheim of the 452nd experienced the culture firsthand, as Iraqi people would show him a sign of respect by holding onto his hand while talking to him. “I asked one contractor if he wanted to keep in touch by e-mail, but he didn’t have an address, so that was disappointing, but they are great people, and giving them opportunities is a great thing.”

“We had contractors who spoke English and had four-year degrees but weren’t given the opportunity because of their religion. Through FOO money and working with them, they helped us out just as much as we helped them,” explained Melheim.

During the Saddam regime, Iraqis were often imprisoned for speaking English. Now many Iraqis are beginning to speak the language on a more regular basis.

The Iraqi contractors pick the potential workers and perform about three background checks before allowing them to work with the Army. Boyack said the people were eager to work and regain ownership of their country. Workers received \$5 a day, supervisors earned \$7 and the contractors raked in \$12.



A Soldier from the 452nd Quartermaster Company hands out candy to children in an Iraqi village. Soldiers often distributed extra care packages to Iraqi villages.

U.S. Army photo

The 452nd was so overwhelmed with care packages sent in from their families, they decided to give them away. “A group usually went out once a month and gave packages to the villages, and they were thrilled to have them,” Boyack said. “Through the contractors to the reaction of the villages, ending the Saddam régime was the best thing that ever happened for these people.” ♦

By SPC Michael Weerts, 88 RRC Public Affairs Office

Going Hi-Tech

Web portal allows better connection between Soldiers and families.

You've got questions? They've got answers. The Army Reserve Family Program's (ARFP) has designed a new web portal to connect Soldiers, families, ARFP volunteers, and employers of Army Reserve Soldiers with timely information, news, benefits and much more.

"It will be kind of like the 'Yahoo' to the Army Reserve," said Michael Sick, DefenseWeb marketing and business development consultant for the ARFP web portal.

"The portal will serve as a 'one-stop knowledge center' for all Soldiers, families, ARFP volunteers and other customers on information related to the Army Reserve," said Michael J. Evans, Army Reserve regional family programs manager and project manager on the web portal.

The site directly links families to essential web sites that can help answer important questions on TRICARE health insurance, teach coping strategies in dealing with the stress of a deployment, or resolve direct deposit issues.

The portal also functions as a conduit to help Soldiers, families and friends stay connected on the home front. ARFP users can record messages on a digital camcorder, upload the videos on the ARFP portal, and then send the video just like an e-mail. The video message is sent as an e-mail containing a web address. Clicking on the web address link streams the video message.

Sick said the video messaging can be done with any Soldier anywhere as long as that Soldier can check and read e-mail.

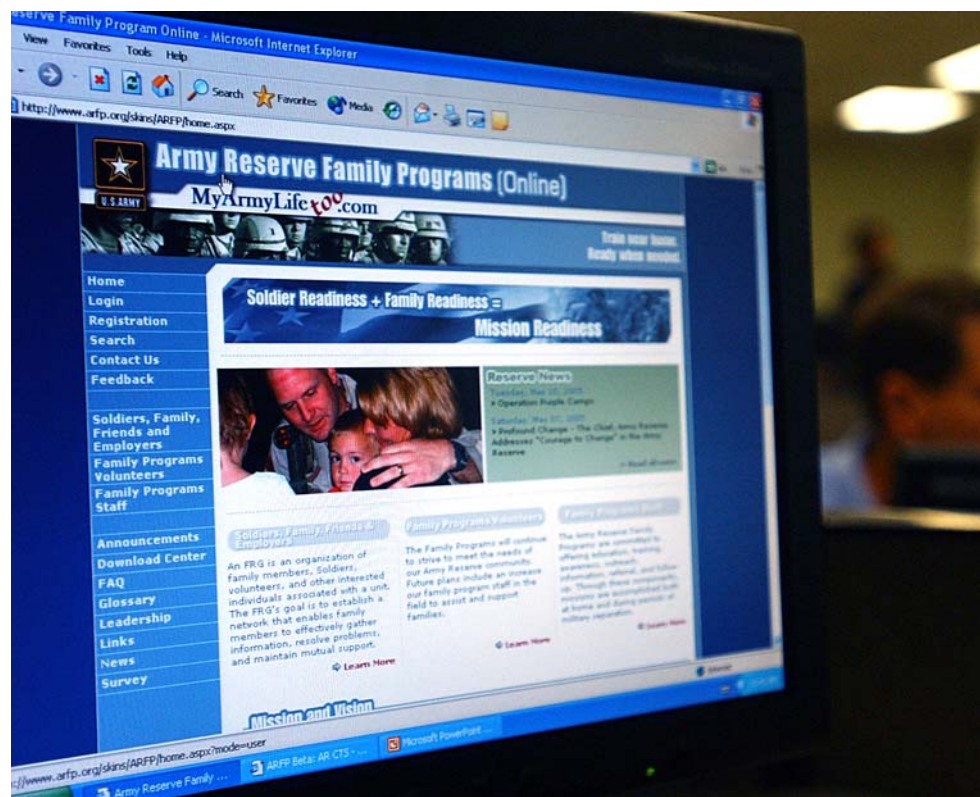
Army Reserve employers can find information on the Army Reserve to better understand their Citizen-Soldier's commitment and learn about Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR).

"This is just the tip of the iceberg in terms of the evolution and development of tools such as this. As Army Reserve Family Programs grow, obviously the need for this application will grow as well," said Lt. Col. Todd M. Friesen, project manager on the ARFP portal and the

former officer in charge of family readiness at the 88th Regional Readiness Command.

Based on the vision and long-range goals of Mr. C.R. Lee Ratliff Jr., director of Army Reserve Family Programs, Friesen and Evans started sketching a business model for the ARFP portal. They were faced with defining what specific services and applications the portal would provide for their customers. The web portal was designed with flexibility in mind, and modifications will be made according to the changing needs of the user, along with evolving business practices and processes, Friesen said.

But no matter how "useful" a site may be, it's really not much help if nobody can



Look for the Army Reserve Family Program homepage, shown here, at www.ARFP.org.

figure out how to use it. That's why DefenseWeb worked hard to make sure the site was easy to use. "(ARFP staff members) have commented on the usability, which goes hand and hand with the look and feel of the website," said Scott Holmes, project manager for DefenseWeb. Holmes said ARFP users have also commented on how easy it is to navigate, browse, and log on to the site.

Users connecting to the portal for the first time will be asked to register. ARFP will use that information to reach out to that user by address, phone number or e-mail, and provide them with additional information.

"If the user just wants to come in and check out the site and they don't want to register, that's fine," said Evans. "We aren't going to force them. We are just going to highly encourage them because that gives us another tool to reach out and connect with them."

"One of the shortfalls that I've seen with regard to family programs over the last couple years is that we've had a problem with a centralized database of family program volunteers," said Maj. Gilbert M. Martin, 63rd Regional Readiness Command family readiness operations officer.

Before the ARFP portal's central database, Martin said his family readiness group used what they called "multi-referenced confusion" to keep track of family readiness group members. Member tracking used to be generated by various lists from many Family Readiness Groups (FRG) and compiled into another database that was clogged with five years worth of expired data.

"Just to know that we can go to an accurate, centralized, up-to-date source is going to completely revitalize this trend we've had five years plus and try to become automated," said Martin. "I'm really excited about this new web portal training and where it's going to take us."

Evans said that before the portal, each RRC had their own databases with no way of centrally reporting that information, but on Oct. 1 ARFP transitioned to the portal for day-to-day operations.

DefenseWeb Technologies, Inc., a San Diego-based software development and system integrator and the developer of the portal, started working jointly with the Army Reserve on this project in October 2004. Before the ARFP portal, DefenseWeb had developed a similar product for the active Army. Friesen and Evans reviewed this portal and adapted it to meeting the needs of the ARFP portal.

The portal project originally started as a single family readiness volunteer management database for only one



Scott Holmes, project manager for DefenseWeb Technologies Inc., goes over a practical exercise with Barbara A. Buckner, family programs assistant for the 352nd Civil Affairs command, in a learning session on how to use the new ARFP web portal.

unit in the 88th RRC.

After the September 11th terrorist attacks, John E. Tucker, a civilian at the time, re-enlisted in the Army Reserve. Tucker started working in family readiness for the 6015th Garrison Support Unit under the 88th Regional Readiness Command. His Family Readiness Group leader knew Tucker had a background in computer databases and programming and approached him about creating a family programs database for the unit.

From Tucker's unit, the database was adopted by other units and other RRCs. More applications were added to the database. Eventually Friesen and Evans became project managers for the portal and DefenseWeb began developing the family support system.

What started as a program to track volunteers for a single Reserve unit ultimately evolved into a product that could serve many functions in the Army Reserve family. With ARFP going hi-tech and automated, both Friesen and Evans said the human quality of Family Programs won't diminish, but will instead enhance communications with Soldiers, their families and their employers. ♦

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Chris Farley, 88th RRC Public Affairs Office





Change of Command

In the midst of a hot, muggy summer day, Brig. Gen. Robert A. Pollmann became the 88th Regional Readiness Command's 20th documented commanding general during a change of command ceremony on July 10 at Historic Fort Snelling. Pollmann assumed command from

retiring Brig. Gen. Michael W. Beasley, who served as the commanding general at the 88th RRC since July 11, 2001.

As 130 unit commanders accompanied by Soldiers holding their distinguished unit flags stood at attention, Command Sgt. Maj. John S. Werner led Lt. Gen. James R.

Helmly, Chief of the U.S. Army Reserve, Pollmann and Beasley to the parade field to begin the ceremony.

A Vietnam-era Army jeep then drove across the field to pick up Helmly and Beasley. They drove around the field to give Beasley one continued on next page



Brig. Gen. Michael W. Beasley gives his final salute to his Soldiers as he rides alongside the Chief of the Army Reserve, Lt. Gen. James R. Helmly, in the back of a Vietnam-era jeep.

Photo by Spc. Adam Dielschneider



Photo by Spc. Michael Weerts

continued from previous page

final passing review of his fellow Soldiers.

Beasley, accompanied by his wife, Bobbie, was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal and a presidential certificate of appreciation. For her outstanding services, Bobbie was awarded the civilian Meritorious Service Medal and a spousal certificate of appreciation.

As Helmly approached the podium to wish Beasley a farewell and welcome Pollmann, he acknowledged that the families of the troops have the toughest job, and their support and patience shouldn't go unnoticed.

"Change is an unsettling thing for anyone to go through, but change we must for the threats that we are dealt," said Helmly. "We are more capable now, and the Soldiers are people that make the difference in war. The

families who support the troops are patriotic heroes."

As Beasley gave his goodbye speech, his message to Pollmann was to lead from the heart as well as the mind and direct the 23,000 soldiers under him wisely, since there isn't anything they can't accomplish. "My only recommendation is to hold on tight—it will be truly a wondrous ride. Expect the very best, accept only the very best, and you will receive the very best."

Beasley stated that he may be out of office, but he will still be there in spirit. If he is ever needed, he will report on time and be ready. "I will be a Blue Devil forever," Beasley said proudly.

During the course of his military career, Beasley has been awarded the Defense Superior Service Medal, the Legion of Merit, the Bronze Star with oak leaf cluster, Air Medal, the Army Commendation Medal with two oak leaf clusters, the Army Achievement Medal, and the Parachutist Badge. His awards for foreign service include the Vietnam Cross of Gallantry, the NATO Medal, and the Saudi Arabia/Kuwait Service Medals.

Pollmann, assuming command



Photo by Spc. Adam Dielschneider





Photo by Spc. Adam Dielschneider

with over 30 years of military experience, is coming from the 420th Engineer Brigade Commander position. Pollmann has been awarded the Bronze Star Medal, Meritorious Service Medal with two oak leaf clusters, Army Com-

mendation Medal, and the Army Achievement Medal with oak leaf cluster.

Pollmann desires to keep the ship sailing in the direction that has made the 88th RRC successful. "There will be no significant changes off the bat. What I will be doing is fine tuning and assessing the command on what changes can be made for improvement that is required," explained Pollmann.

His main focuses will be supporting the Global War on Terrorism and taking care of the Soldiers. "The goal is to continue to mobilize and to meet all the requirements and to ensure that Soldiers and their families are taken care of during their deployment, in particular to those Soldiers wounded in action."

Pollmann says that he is still in the learning stages and will continue to learn as he takes over command of the 88th RRC. "The staff has been great, General Beasley has been most helpful, and my reactivation to the 88th is going to be a learning process," Pollmann said.



Photo by Spc. Adam Dielschneider

"I want to thank all the Soldiers in the 88th RRC who have been a tremendous support on the Global War on Terrorism, and let them know that each and every one of them is vital to our operations, and the efforts from their families is most appreciated." ♦

By Spc. Michael Weerts,
88th RRC PAO



Photo by Spc. Michael Weerts

(Clockwise from top left, opposite page) (top left) Lt. Gen. James R. Helmly presents Brig. Gen. Michael W. Beasley with the Distinguished Service Medal. (top center) A Soldier from the Blue Devil Horse Platoon takes part in the change of command ceremony. (top right) A flag waves from the ramparts of Historic Fort Snelling, where the ceremony took place. (lower right) Brig. Gen. Robert A. Pollmann, incoming commanding general for the 88th RRC, salutes during the ceremony. (Lower center) A Soldier from the 88th RRC salutes during the playing of the National Anthem at the ceremony. (lower left) Bobbie Beasley is presented with flowers during the ceremony.



Photo by Spc. Michael Weerts

'Out Front'

with the 367th Engineering Battalion

What does an engineering battalion do when they deploy? They “git er done” as they often say in their best Larry the Cable Guy imitation -- and that’s exactly what the 367th Engineering Battalion (EN BN) did when they deployed to Afghanistan in February, 2004.

This battalion, last deployed in 1944 during World War II, mobilized for 14 months in support of Operation Enduring Freedom during which time they lived up to their motto “Out Front.”

The missions of the 367th EN BN companies varied slightly, but the main goal was consistent for all. Upon mobilization, they supported corps operations by conducting mobility, counter-mobility and survivability operations to increase the combat effectiveness of the supported unit. In civilian-speak, this means they provided airfield and road improvement, emplaced and destroyed obstacles and emplaced and breached mine fields. Special skills many of the Soldiers had, including carpentry, plumbing, electrical and surveying, helped accomplish those missions.

“Our task organization was really based on our civilian-acquired skills,”

said Lt. Col. Scott Anderson, 367 EN BN commander. A Soldier who worked as a civilian electrician also used those skills toward attaining the battalion mission.

“We started out in hasty, dirty tent camps where a tent skeleton was draped over a 2x4 frame,” said Anderson. “No plumbing, no electrical.” The



Flames from a detonated mine engulf an RG31 vehicle belonging to the 367th EN BN. The vehicle’s armor retrofit kit protected all three passengers from serious injury.

U.S. Army photo

shower facilities were sometimes as sparse as two per 100 Soldiers, with the constant challenge of water shortage.

“Doing laundry in a five-gallon pail and long-term camping in these conditions gets really old,” continued Anderson. “Our facilities were among the most austere conditions of any country; more so than Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar...” There were virtually no decent roads, so most transportation occurred via helicopter. This sometimes meant that a Soldier with a

single-week mission could wait up to 30 days to be transported in or out of an area.

A number of base camps were built by the 367th, including facilities for the Combined Joint Special Forces Operations Task Forces (CJSOTF). The Special Forces were so pleased with the level of skill and initiative shown by the 367th, they used their advice in decisions toward building security checkpoints. “(The 367th became) the ‘Go To’ battalion in Afghanistan to really get things done,” Anderson said. “The CJSOTF thought we were outstanding!” They and their mine-detection equipment were used for “Sensitive Site Exploitation Missions,” or

raiding compounds, which resulted in a 50 percent increase in the speed of these missions and a significant decrease in potential casualties.

“(We) built a base camp from the ground up, to include housing, dining facilities, aid stations, showers and latrines for both American and Afghan Soldiers,” said Company C 1st Sgt. Michael R. LaFontaine, adding that his company conducted more than 130 construction missions with its authorized strength of 129 Soldiers. The result was so impressive, it was used as a template for additional locations. The construction brought what

many in the region considered absolute luxury, as it not only allowed Soldiers to take more than one shower a week, it allowed them to stop having to burn their own waste, said LaFontaine.

Another primary goal for the battalion during deployment was to clear mines from the equivalent of six million square yards, or approximately 1,240 acres of land, according to Maj. Dan Hoben, 367 EN BN executive officer. Clearing land mines is a delicate and dangerous mission, and it can

be done in several ways, including mine-sniffing dogs and mechanical methods, such as armored bulldozers and Hydrema or Aardvark flails.

The 40,000-pound Hydrema and Aardvark, costing \$500,000-\$600,000, use flailing weighted chains to detonate buried mines. The clouds of dust flailed up are so large that a second machine is used as a “spotter” for the first, which is usually enveloped in the sand cloud.

One memorable mined area yielded 236 anti-tank mines, each of which caused an explosion with awe-inspiring fireballs and clouds of smoke. Wildly disconcerting to many, but not so to Sgt. 1st Class Gary Feldewerd, leader of a group of Hydrema-driving Soldiers. “There can be a mine anywhere,” said Feldewerd. “That’s the joy of it, so to speak. Startling is probably the first reaction, then some excitement after everyone’s okay.”

Caring for and repairing all the equipment was an ongoing battle in

“It’s a good feeling to keep the mission going and to be able to support the mission,” said Company A mechanic, Spc. John Myhre.

“It’s really just a change in location, not a change in my job,” said Spc. Matthew Erickson, Company A. “Parts are definitely harder to come by here, but we do what we can to get what we need to fix the equipment.”

Another of the many challenges faced by this battalion was that its Soldiers were scattered from Bagram Air Base to remote parts of Iraq. Most of them were given an opportunity for a two-week leave during their mobilization, but that opportunity also brought potential stress. “They were afraid it would be too hard to come back,” said Anderson.

But, of course, they did come back. One reason to return was pride in what they accomplished during their mission. For example, the battalion’s mission goal was completed months earlier than projected. Key tasks accomplished included laying many acres of one-foot-thick concrete for

runway expansion in Bagram, Salerno, Kandahar and other base camps.

Early mission accomplishment allowed Anderson to support seven separate Provincial Reconstruction Teams with two volunteer Soldiers per team. These teams, a new concept including Civil Affairs Soldiers, are becoming a big part of the unit mission,



A Soldier from the 367th EN BN makes a repair on a piece of mine-clearing machinery.
U.S. Army photo

according to Anderson. They made great strides in construction and reconstruction of schools, villages and more, serving as quality control and teaching the Afghans to construct safely and well.

The companies of the 367th also participated in a number of humanitarian assistance missions, distributing more than 5,000 pairs of shoes, 200 boxes of clothing and 400 school kits to more than 1,500 Afghan people. This was a particularly meaningful accomplishment in a mountainous region during the most punishing Afghan winter in 20 years.

All of which makes the words Minnesota Governor Tim Pawlenty used to address the battalion during a pre-mobilization ceremony seem prophetic. “You are heroes; you are the folks who are the difference-makers in history. Our country at every step needs to appreciate and express gratitude and thanks for your willingness to step forward and serve.”

The satisfaction of a job well-done, both militarily and humanely, and a chance to make history—one can’t ask for much more. And it’s all part of a mission the 367 EN BN accomplished “Out Front.” ♦

By Master Sgt. Janet M. Jones,
88th RRC Public Affairs Office
Photos courtesy of 367th EN BN



The 367th EN BN built their base camp literally from the ground up.
U.S. Army photo

itself. The battalion’s equipment inventory included some of the heaviest vehicles brought to Afghanistan: bulldozers, flailers, dump trucks and five-ton trucks. A team of heavy-vehicle mechanics spent their time making safety improvements to these machines, such as adding armor kits, as well as keeping the approximately 600 pieces of heavy equipment functional.

Maupin Remembered

Computer donation enables computer center, internet cafe dedication

The Soldier's Creed contains the words "I will not leave a fallen comrade." and these words are carried out by the actions of Soldiers everyday. Sgt. Keith Matthew Maupin, the only U.S. soldier still listed as captured in Iraq, has not been forgotten by fellow

soldiers serving at Logistical Support Area Anaconda. A new computer lab at the Education Center here has been dedicated to him.

The Sgt. Matt Maupin Computer Lab officially opened on Sept. 19. The lab was made possible by the donation of 35 computers by Maupin's parents, Keith and Carolyn Maupin. Another 55

Soldiers salute during the Sept. 19 dedication of the Sgt. Matt Maupin Computer Lab at Camp Anaconda, Iraq. A Sgt. Matt Maupin Internet Cafe was also dedicated at Camp Anaconda.

donated computers will be used to set up the Sgt. Matt Maupin Internet Café at LSA Anaconda.

Maupin, of Batavia, Ohio, is assigned to the 724th Transportation Company. The Army Reserve unit is based out of Bartonville, Ill. Maupin deployed to Iraq in February 2004 with the unit in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. One of his chief complaints during phone calls home was the difficulty he had accessing a computer to email home.

On April 9, 2004, the one year anniversary of the fall of Baghdad, Maupin was on a convoy to deliver fuel when it was attacked near the Baghdad International Airport by a force of nearly 200 insurgents. They attacked with small-arms fire;

rocket propelled grenades, machine gun fire and improvised explosive devices. Shortly after the attack, Maupin's status was listed as whereabouts unknown.

On April 16, 2004 Maupin was shown alive in a video on the Al-Jazeera television network. His status was officially changed to captured.

"This lab will allow all warriors who are serving in Iraq to stay in touch with their families, pursue education, or simply enjoy some personal time surfing the World Wide Web," said Brig. Gen. Yves Fontaine, the commander of the 1st Corps Support Command and LSA Anaconda. "We open the doors to this facility with the hope that Matt will be found soon."

The computers are dedicated for Soldier's personal use, said Sgt. Maj. Angela Adams, of the 301st Corps Support Group and the noncommissioned officer in charge of the Education

Center. She also noted the marked improvement over the previous set up.

"We used to have 10 laptops that everyone was using," Adams said, "we had about 8,000 users so far and that was just on our little laptops."

Adams envisions more soldiers being able to complete online college classes as well as correspondence courses.

"Now we'll get more users, and the system is so much faster. It'll give them more services, and more users will be able to use [the computers]," said Adams. "From 10 to 35, you just can't beat it."

Some special improvements had to be made at the Education Center to accommodate the gift, said Master Sgt. Marcus Williamson, a communications section chief from the 301st. Extra power had to be wired into the computer lab as well as additional internet service lines.

Along with college classes and email services, Soldiers are able to use instant messaging programs, download pictures from home and even use webcams to chat with family.

"They can download stuff, but in the evening the system will check itself and erase whatever is not part of what we put in," said Williamson.

Each computer had its hard drive 'ghosted' so every system will have the same software. They also all feature a picture of Maupin as the background image to remind Soldiers he is still held captive.

"These are a dedicated resource to bridge the communication gap," said Fontaine, "Direct communications services provided here will give families and soldiers the ability to share strength, courage, determination and pride. It will keep fathers in touch with daughters; mothers and sons, husbands and wives."

Quoting the National League of POW/MIA Families motto, "Not Forgotten," Fontaine spoke of Maupin and what the computer lab symbolizes.

"The story is told about Matt, that he is a proud soldier, who knows his duty and does not shirk from it. He is loved and missed by everyone who knows him. Our country remains dedicated to finding Matt. The efforts of this lab are representative of the respect and concern our nation has for finding him," the general said. "The systems are for the exclusive use for soldiers, and all bear a picture of Sergeant Maupin as a reminder that he is still out there waiting for us." ♦

Story and photo by Sgt. Jason Mikeworth, 207th MPAD



Back to work

Programs help demobilizing Soldiers find jobs

The Army is not your everyday job. Few soldiers would argue that, especially when their 'job' takes them to the caves of Afghanistan or the mean streets of Baghdad for 16 months. To ease the difficult passage back into the civilian workforce after a deployment, soldiers can take advantage of a wealth of programs designed especially for veterans.

The following are just some of the programs worth exploring if you are interested in changing or starting a new career.

Helmets to Hardhats

www.helmetstohardhats.org

The program collects information about career opportunities in building and construction trades. Candidates can access information about careers and apprenticeships via the Internet from anywhere in the world. To ap-



ply for work or membership, each candidate must complete a comprehensive profile that helps Helmets to Hardhats point candidates in the right direction. The program then connects the candidate with the right opportunity in the right location, serving as an advocate wherever necessary.

Most candidates will enter an apprenticeship program that lasts around four years. During that time you will

take classes for the trade and go to job sites to work. You will also receive a benefit plan. While working, your average wage will be around half of a Journeyman's wage and you may also be eligible for GI benefits. In most cases your wage would increase each year. After completion of the apprenticeship, you will become a Journeyman with full Journeyman wages.

Civilians support national defense

<http://acpol.army.mil/employment/>

The Board of War and Ordnance was established in 1776 with responsibility to equip and dispatch troops, account for arms, ammunition and equipment, maintain personnel records and disburse funds. The board was made up of five members of the continental Congress, clerks and a paid secretary, Richard Peters, the first Army Civilian.

Throughout our nation's history, civilians have played a vital role in supporting Soldiers. Army civilians have skills that are not readily available in the military, but crucial to support military operations.

Career advancement generally follows a path from entry level, through the intermediate level, to managerial or executive position. Individual progression depends on a variety of factors including demonstrated performance, assignments completed, formal education, functional and geographical mobility, and completion of training programs.

5 -Point Preference

Five points are added to the passing examination score of a veteran who served:

- During the period Dec. 7, 1941,

to July 1, 1955; or

- For more than 180 consecutive days, any part of which occurred after Jan. 31, 1955, and before Oct. 15, 1976; or

- During the Gulf War from Aug. 2, 1990 through Jan. 2, 1992; or

- In a campaign or expedition for which a campaign medal has been authorized, including El Salvador, Grenada, Haiti, Lebanon, Panama, Somalia, Southwest Asia, Bosnia, and the Global War on Terrorism.

Medal holders and Gulf War veterans who enlisted after Sept. 7, 1980, or entered on active duty on or after Oct. 14, 1982, must have served continuously for 24 months or the full period called or ordered to active duty. The service requirement does not apply to veterans with compensable service-connected disabilities, or to veterans separated for disability in the line of duty, or for hardship.

10-Point Preference

Ten points are added to the passing examination score of:

- A veteran who served any time and who (1) has a present service-connected disability or (2) is receiving compensation, disability retirement benefits, or pension from the military or the Department of Veterans Affairs. Individuals who received a Purple Heart qualify as disabled veterans.

- An unmarried spouse of certain deceased veterans, a spouse of a veteran unable to work because of a service-connected disability, and

- A mother of a veteran who died in service or who is permanently and totally disabled.



Federal Employee USA Jobs

www.usajobs.opm.gov

The Federal Government's official one-stop source for Federal jobs and employment information. Search the database of more than 16,000 exciting public service opportunities. You can access USAJOBS and discover opportunities around the world.

Created by the US Office of Personnel Management, USAJOBS is the official job site of the US Federal Government. It's your one stop source for Federal Government. Here you will



see employment opportunities from federal agencies ranging from the Department of Agriculture to the State Department, and links to help sites such as VetsFirst.

Troops to Teachers

www.ProudToServeAgain.com

Troops to Teachers (TTT) is managed by the Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES), Pensacola, Florida.

Reflecting the focus of the No Child Left behind

Act of 2001, the primary objective of TTT is to help recruit quality teachers for schools that serve low-income

families throughout America. TTT helps relieve teacher shortages, especially in math, science, special education and other high-needs subject areas, and assists military personnel in making successful transitions to second careers in teaching.

Funding has been appropriated for FY 2005 to provide financial assistance to eligible participants, provide placement assistance, referral services, and maintain a network of state offices. Military personnel interested in a second career in public education may submit a registration form to DANTES.

A network of state TTT Offices has been established to provide counseling and assistance regarding certification requirements, routes to state certification, and employment leads. The TTT homepage provides information and resource links, including a job referral system to allow participants to search for job vacancies as well as links to state Departments of Education, state certification offices, model resumes, and other job listing sites in public education.

Pending availability of funds, financial assistance may be provided to eligible individuals with stipends up to \$5,000 to help pay for teacher certification costs, or bonuses of \$10,000 to

stipend or bonus must agree to teach for three years in schools that serve students from low-income families in accordance with the authorizing legislation.

Educational and Service eligibility requirements for Referral and Placement Assistance services and Financial Assistance are available on the TTT Home Page. Also available is a "Self Determination Guide" to quickly assess eligibility.

Register with Troops to Teachers by contacting your the Education Center or download a registration from the TTT Home Page. Eligible active duty and reserve personnel may register with Troops to Teachers at any time. Counseling and information are available to all participants, however, financial assistance may not be provided to active duty personnel until one year prior to retirement. Contact the DANTES Troops to Teachers office regarding questions about eligibility or services offered.

Can't get enough of that army stuff? Try AGR

www.hrc.army.mil/site/reserve/

The Active Guard Reserve (AGR) Program supports and enhances the mobilization readiness of the Army Reserve. AGR soldiers serve full time and enjoy the same benefits and entitlements of an Active Duty soldier, including full commissary and Post Exchange privileges, medical care for themselves and their immediate family and the opportunity for immediate retirement after 20 years of Active Service. Soldiers serving within the AGR Program are stationed worldwide in positions which directly support the Army Reserve. ♦

By Sgt. 1st Class Susanne Aspley,
88th RRC Public Affairs Office



teach in schools serving a high percentage of students from low-income families. Participants who accept the

New TRICARE Option

Many Reserve Component Soldiers who return from a mobilization find themselves in what can be a rough transition between military and civilian life. This is especially true when it comes to health insurance—once a Soldier's 180 days of transitional TRICARE run out after coming home, he or she must find other healthcare coverage. But TRICARE Reserve Select (TRS) is now available to Reserve Component Soldiers who served in support of a contingency operation.

TRS was implemented April 26, 2005. TRS offers competitive monthly premiums and the same coverage as TRICARE Standard and TRICARE Extra, making it a great deal for those looking for something to fill a gap in insurance coverage.

To be eligible for TRS, you must have served at least 90 days on active duty in support of a contingency operation on or after 9/11. For every 90 days of active duty you served, you can buy one year of TRS coverage.

Premiums for TRS are \$75 per month for the service member or \$233 per month for the entire family. The monthly premium is the same regardless of age, gender, family health history, or pre-existing conditions.

TRS covers most medically necessary services at a wide range of medical facilities. Annual deductibles for E-1 to E-4 personnel are \$50 for the individual and \$100 for the family, and for E-5 and above, \$150 for the individual and \$300 for the fam-

ily. Co-payments are 20 percent of allowed charges.

To enroll in TRS, Soldiers must enter into a service agreement. TRS can only be used while a Soldier is on Selected Reserve status, not on IMA or IRR status, so enrolling in TRS for a period that extends beyond your ETS date will lengthen your time in service. Soldiers are eligible for one year of TRS for every 90 days served on active duty. A time span shorter than this maximum amount can be chosen, but consider your decision; you can-

not change the service agreement later. TRICARE contractor. See www.tricare.osd.mil to locate your region and your contractor.

While the coverage and premiums for TRS are competitive compared to most civilian insurance companies, consider the following:

The Service Agreement is a contract, meaning that even if you discontinue TRS for any reason, you are still committed to serving in the Reserve Components for the agreed period of time. Also, missed payments that result in disenrollment in TRS will permanently prevent that Soldier from using the program again. If the Soldier dies in TPU status (not mobilized) while insuring his or her family under TRS, coverage will end the last day of the month of the Soldier's death.

The premium rates for both the individual and family will increase in 2006, and these increases should be announced by November 2005.

Enrolling in TRS is time-sensitive. Those who returned from active duty before 26 April 2005 have until October 28 to enroll in the program. Those who ended their tour after April 26 or are still on active duty must enter into a service agreement before leaving active duty.

TRS offers a very affordable way to keep you and your family covered—just be sure to know both the pros and the cons before committing to the Service Agreement. To learn more about the TRS program, visit the TRICARE website at www.tricare.osd.mil. ♦

Story by Spc. Adam Dielschneider, 364th Mobile Public Affairs Det.



For more information about TRS, call your regional TRICARE office according to the state you live in.

not change the service agreement later.

The first step is to go to <https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/guard-reserveportal>. Go to TRS. Enter your information and the database will respond with the number of years you may purchase TRS.

Complete DD2895, sign and date it, and submit it to a Verifying Service Officer for entry into DEERS. Fax it to 404-464-9015 if you are Army Reserve TPU. Allow about two weeks for the Verifying Officer to review it and enter your eligibility into DEERS.

Print your personalized enrollment form from the same portal. Mail it with the first premium payment to your

Freedom Calls Close the Distance Between Loved Ones

Sgt. Nicholas Suarez (USMC) was stationed in Fallujah on Christmas Eve, 2004 and had not seen his family since 2002. On this holiday, however, he was finally able to see his parents while still serving in Iraq – thanks to the Freedom Calls Foundation (FC).

An FC event was held in Chicago on Christmas Eve of 2004, allowing seventeen families to see and speak with their Soldiers in Iraq over video teleconference – free of charge – thanks to coordination by Jeanmarie Kapp and other FC volunteers in the area.

“Their conversation was private, but I will tell you that I hugged Sgt. Suarez’s father as he left the room. He cried on my shoulder because he was so overcome with emotion at seeing and speaking to the son he hadn’t seen in years,” said Kapp.

Kapp is the foundation liaison for the Chicago area, helping families and friends in Illinois, Southern Wisconsin and Northern Indiana use computer facilities to speak with and see their family members serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

With the logo “Family Communication on the Frontlines,” the foundation was founded to help alleviate the stress servicemembers face while on duty miles away from loved ones, according to a Defense Department news article.

The state-of-the-art video conferencing technology provided by the FC allows military personnel in Camps Fallujah, Taji (formerly Camp Cooke) and al Asad to interact with family and friends back home in a more personal manner than was ever before seen during wartime.

And while the technology is sophisticated, it is easy to use, according to the DoD article. Additionally, it is provided free of charge with the help of individual and corporate sponsors.

FC events, held by Kapp and other volunteers across the country, allow the many military families and friends who lack the necessary computer equipment – such as video cameras and high speed internet – to communicate with their service members overseas.

At Camps Fallujah, Taji and al Asad, this equipment is available to Soldiers

24 hours a day, thanks to the FC facilities set up there.

A warmly recognized national program, the Freedom Calls Foundation has been praised in writing by Senator Edward Kennedy; officially thanked by Major General Antonio Taguba, the Deputy Commanding General of Support, Coalition Forces Land Component Command; and recognized by the DoD program America Supports You, according to the organization’s website. Now Kapp hopes to connect even more families and friends from the Chicago area with their Soldiers stationed in Iraq.

According to her organization’s website, FC events are held in the Northwest suburbs of Chicago on every second Sunday. Kapp will support any Soldiers or families from Illinois, Southern Wisconsin and Northern Indiana.

“That’s why I do this,” commented Kapp after helping to connect the Suarez family on Christmas Eve. “Putting together these families is all the evidence I need to know that FC is worthwhile and what I should be doing.” ♦

88th Conducts Single Soldier Readiness Weekends

Soldiers from the 88th Regional Readiness Command’s (RRC) Chaplain and Surgeon Office recently conducted a Single Soldier Reintegration (SSR) weekend for Soldiers who have returned from overseas deployments.

The Friday-through-Sunday event was not only for single, but also divorced and widowed Soldiers. The SSR covers a wide variety of helpful topics including dating, dealing with loneliness, financial matters, single parenting, and stress management. The weekends are conducted prima-

rily to help unmarried 88th RRC Soldiers transition back to their normal world and move on to the next level in their personal lives and civilian careers, said Chaplain (Capt.) Diana Bradie-Timberlake.

“After deployment a Soldier can stagnate in a place of indecision, chaos, and anger, and the purpose of these SSRs is to help them readjust as much as possible,” she said. “We want all Soldiers to know that there are others out there with the same issues and that they really are not alone just because they’re not married.”

“This weekend made me realize that being single isn’t the worst thing in the world, that it can be a positive experience,” said Spc. Danny Morales, 379th Chemical Company, who returned from Kuwait in February 2005.

All single Soldiers are invited to attend future SSR weekends, which are conducted bi-monthly. Soldiers interested in attending an SSR can contact Chaplain (Maj.) Robert Burmeister at 1-800-The-Army, ex. 3626, or Sgt. Deborah Malloy at extension 3937 for more information. ♦

Army to Test Program to Up Enlistment Age

The Army has announced a three-year test program to evaluate raising the reserve-component non-prior-service maximum enlistment age from less than 35 years of age to less than 40 years of age.

The program will evaluate the feasibility of a permanent change to the enlistment policy for the Army reserve components, officials said. The test will begin immediately and continue through Sept. 30, 2008.

“Raising the maximum age for non-prior-service enlistment expands the recruiting pool, provides motivated individuals an opportunity to serve, and strengthens the readiness of Reserve units,” said Lt. Col. Roy Steed, chief, Recruiting and Policy Branch, under the Army G1 (Personnel).

All applicants must meet the same

eligibility standards, to include passing the same physical standards and medical examination.

Experience has shown that older recruits who can meet the physical demands of military service generally make excellent Soldiers based on maturity, motivation, loyalty, and patriotism, Steed said.

“When you look across the population, we are living longer and now a 40-year-old can be in better physical shape than a 20-year-old,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Michelle S. Jones, top NCO in the Army Reserve. We are more concerned about our recruits’ level of fitness rather than just their age.”

The impact of the measure on meeting enlistment goals has not been forecast, but it is expected to contribute to the Army’s efforts to recruit top-quality individuals.

“We want to test the program first to validate the change in the age restriction, and then compare attrition rates between different age groups,” Steed said.

At this time, the program does not extend to active-duty Army enlistments, which are set by law rather than policy, Steed said.

The Army Reserve can benefit from the contributions of motivated and mature individuals who make a conscious and informed decision to serve their country, Jones said.

The concept of increasing the maximum enlistment age was initially discussed this past fall, Steed said. The Army requested and received an exception to Department of Defense policy that set the maximum enlistment age in the active and reserve components at less than 35 years of age. ♣

Army Soldiers to Salute Support Team Via New Program

The U.S. Army recently announced the “Freedom Team Salute.” The new recognition program gives all Army Soldiers - Active Duty, Reservists, and National Guardsmen - the opportunity to recognize and thank parents, spouses, and employers for their support. The program also shows Army appreciation to Army veterans.

“In these demanding times, the support of families and employers gives our Soldiers strength and security while they are protecting our nation,” said Army Chief of Staff General Peter J. Schoomaker. “Freedom Team Salute provides Soldiers with an excellent opportunity to salute those at home and to thank them for their continued support and encouragement.”

Nominating someone for a “Freedom Team Salute” is easy - Soldiers will simply visit the website at <http://freedomteamsalute.army.mil> and enter the name and address of the person who supports them. Freedom Team

Salute honorees will receive a Freedom Team Salute Commendation package, including an official Army lapel pin, a U.S. Army decal, a letter of thanks and a certificate of appreciation. Veterans can log onto the website and simply enter their name and address.



Francis Harvey, secretary of the Army (left) presents the first Freedom Team Salute lapel pin to David Rodriguez, commander of the American GI Forum, a Hispanic veterans organization.

Ssg Carmen L. Burgess

The new program enhances the Army’s “Operation Tribute to Freedom” outreach initiatives, where Soldiers speak with area civic clubs and community organizations, participate in major sporting events and local celebrations, and return to their hometowns following combat duties overseas. During the past 22 months, patriotic citizens and family members sent 35,000 greetings and messages of support to Army troops under this initiative using the web site <http://www4.army.mil/ocpa/tooursoldiers/>

For more information on “Freedom Team Salute,” please contact Maj. Elizabeth Robbins, elizabeth.robbs@hqda.army.mil or (703) 697-5343. ♣

The New Army EO Database

Keeping track of the Equal Opportunity (EO) program has never been easier. Technology has again prevailed, and what used to take weeks now takes seconds using the new Army EO database. In the past, commanders had plenty of leeway when it came to EO issues. Now the military has replaced that leeway with several tasks to accomplish.

Each unit must have a registered user for the EO database. At a minimum, information must be entered concerning completion of your unit's Command Climate Assessment, upcoming training, and individual complaints. When I speak with unit commanders, some say they are hesitant to log the complaint information, fearing that a less-than-stellar rating will befall them. I would like to say this won't happen, but unfortunately this is a risk every commander must take.

The positive side of that risk is that our Soldiers, if they have a valid complaint, will receive a full and timely evaluation of their concern. Any unit under the 88th RRC's footprint registered in the database can have its information viewed by me, USARC, and the Department of the Army. The system was designed as a control mechanism to track complaint follow-ups and mandatory EO training.

At the click of a mouse, I can obtain a list of every unit registered and view up-coming training, as well as track timelines on formal complaints of discrimination and sexual harassment. When the commanding general has a question concerning personnel issues within an organization, I can give him a much more accurate snapshot of the unit from a Human Relations standpoint. All of this depends on units having registered users.

Registering is very easy. Normally, the training NCO or another appointed individual is directed to go to the Department of the Army EO database website, <https://eo.pentagon.mil>, and click on "registration." The user fills out some contact info, and normally within three days they will receive a username and password. The site is user-friendly with plenty of help buttons should you get confused.

The new 88th commander, Brig. Gen. Robert Pollmann, has signed directives concerning the EO database. The future is here, and we owe it to our Soldiers to get on board with this new system. Anyone having questions/concerns should contact me at Rich.cox@us.army.mil or 1-800-843-2769 x 13053. ♦

Richard (Rich) Cox, Equal Opportunity Specialist, 88th RRC

GI Bill Apprenticeship/OJT Program Offers money

If you are currently in the guard or reserve, the On-The-Job Training (OJT) Program offers you an alternative way to use your VA (GI Bill) education and training benefits. While you are being trained for a new job, you can receive monthly training benefits from the Veterans Affairs in addition to your regular salary, that means you can receive up to \$753 a month (\$216 for Reserve) tax-free, on top of your regular salary! That's up to \$12,000 in cash benefits over two years, for training in an On-The-Job or Apprenticeship training program.

You may be eligible if you are otherwise eligible for the GI Bill either under the Active Duty (Veteran) or Reserve GI Bill programs. Contact your local State Approving Agency (SAA). Your SAA will help you get started on the process and answer any questions you may have.

To get more information on the GI Bill directly from the VA, call toll free 1-888-GI-BILL-1. To make full use of up to \$1,004 a month from the GI Bill, find schools that serve military & veteran students at <http://www.military.com/Education/>. ♦

DOL Improves USERRA Complaint Process

U.S. Labor (DOL) Secretary Elaine L. Chao announced a new service to help ensure National Guard and Reserve servicemembers return to the jobs and benefits they are entitled to under the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA). Soldiers can now file a USERRA or veteran's preference complaint electronically at <https://vets1010.dol.gov/>. The form is called the VETS Form 1010. It is easy to fill out and can be filed in seconds electronically. Employers can obtain detailed information about USERRA by calling 1-866-4-USA-DOL or by visiting <http://www.dol.gov/vets/programs/userra/>. ♦

PLDC now WLC

As of Oct. 15, the Primary Leadership Development Course will be renamed the Warrior Leader Course.

The new WLC curriculum is significantly improved, both technically and tactically, over the former PLDC in an effort to meet the needs of the Soldiers of today and of the future. ♦

